



Planning Commission Recommendation

To: Burlington City Council

From: Burlington Planning Commission

Project: Comprehensive Plan Update – Comprehensive Plan Adoption

Date: February 15, 2023

Summary:

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires most local governments, including the City of Burlington, to adopt comprehensive plans (RCW 36.70A.040). The GMA further requires that the plans adopted by local governments be periodically reviewed and updated (RCW 36.70A.1305(5)). The purpose of this periodic update cycle is to ensure plans reflect current conditions, up-to-date technical knowledge, and changes to legal and regulatory requirements. The City of Burlington adopted a GMA compliant comprehensive plan in 1994 and the City's plan was last updated in 2005. The City was required to complete an update by June of 2016.

The City began the process of updating its comprehensive plan in April 2016. After an initial review, the Planning Commission determined that Burlington's plan was significantly outdated, was not in compliance with numerous regulatory requirements, did not reflect current conditions, and was not in-line with the City's needs. As a result, the Planning Commission directed the City's Community Development Department to conduct a complete overhaul of the Comprehensive Plan and related zoning and development regulations.

During the Comprehensive Plan update effort the Planning Commission evaluated each element of the comprehensive plan and carefully considered information related to land use, housing, natural resources, economic development, parks and open space, transportation, and public facilities. The Planning Commission solicited public comment and conducted approximately 33 public meetings. On January 18, 2023 the Community Development Department submitted a final draft of the updated Comprehensive Plan to the Planning Commission for review. As detailed below, the Planning Commission has determined that the updated Comprehensive Plan fully complies with applicable GMA requirements and recommends it be approved by the City Council.

Findings:

The Planning Commission has reviewed the requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA) and the updated Comprehensive Plan prepared by the Community Development Department. The Planning Commission makes the following findings:

1. In order to address the requirements of the GMA Burlington adopted a comprehensive plan and implementing regulations in 1994.
2. The GMA requires that cities periodically update their comprehensive plans and development regulations. Specifically, cities must update their comprehensive plans and development regulations on an eight year cycle (RCW 36.70A.130(5)). Burlington last completed a periodic update in 2005 and was required to complete another update by June of 2016.
3. In order to address the periodic update requirements of the GMA, the City conducted a thorough review of its comprehensive plan and development regulations.
4. The GMA requires that cities establish and broadly disseminate to the public a public participation program identifying procedures that allow for early and continuous public participation in the development and amendment of comprehensive land use plans and development regulations implementing such plans.
 - a. On August 17, 2016 the Planning Commission reviewed, and recommended the adoption of, a public participation plan and schedule. The public participation plan contained detailed information addressing the dissemination of public information, public meetings, and methods to involve various government agencies and organizations. The public participation plan was reviewed and adopted by the Burlington City Council at a public meeting on September 8, 2016.
 - b. In order to account for scheduling changes and delays, several changes were made to the Public Participation Plan throughout the Comprehensive Plan update process. These changes were considered at open public meetings by the Planning Commission and City Council.
 - c. On April 17, 2019 the Planning Commission held a public hearing for the purpose of individually evaluating public comments and suggestions. The Planning Commission issued a written recommendation outlining the manner in which public comments should be addressed or incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

5. The Planning Commission finds that the Comprehensive Plan includes a Land Use Element. The Planning Commission further finds, that as described in its findings dated August 6, 2018 and February 20, 2019, the Land Use Element addresses the requirements of RCW 36.70A.070(1).
6. The Planning Commission finds that the Comprehensive Plan includes a Housing Element. The Planning Commission further finds, that as described in its findings dated October 17, 2018 and February 20, 2019, the Housing Element addresses the requirements of RCW 36.70A.070(2).
7. The Planning Commission finds that the Comprehensive Plan includes a Transportation Element. The Planning Commission further finds, that as described in its findings dated November 18, 2020, the Transportation Element addresses the requirements of RCW 36.70A.070(6).
8. The Planning Commission finds that the Comprehensive Plan includes an Economic Development Element. The Planning Commission further finds, that as described in its findings dated November 18, 2020, the Economic Development Element addresses the requirements of RCW 36.70A.070(7).
9. The Planning Commission finds that the Comprehensive Plan includes a Parks and Recreation Element. The Planning Commission further finds, that as described in its findings dated November 20, 2019 and September 16, 2020, the Parks and Recreation Element addresses the requirements of RCW 36.70A.070(8).
10. The Planning Commission finds that the City's Comprehensive Plan includes maps illustrating the City's desired pattern of growth, and that the maps are consistent with the text of the comprehensive plan as required by RCW 36.70A.070 and WAC 365-196-405(2)(i)(ii). With respect to the inclusion of comprehensive plan maps the Planning Commission adopts its findings dated May 15, 2019, June 19, 2019, and October 23, 2020.
11. With respect to the consistency requirements of the GMA, the Planning Commission finds that the Comprehensive Plan includes numerous policies aimed at achieving consistency. Specifically, the Planning Commission finds that the Comprehensive Plan includes goals, policies, and other provisions intended to:
 - a. Ensure internal consistency between various components of the Comprehensive Plan, including other planning documents adopted by reference;
 - b. Ensure consistency between the Comprehensive Plan and the City's development regulations;

- c. Ensure consistency between the Comprehensive Plan and capital plans adopted by special service districts and other units of governments;
 - d. Ensure constancy between the City’s actions and the Comprehensive Plan;
 - e. Ensure constancy between the Comprehensive Plan and the plans of surrounding jurisdictions and the Skagit County Countywide Planning Policies.
12. The Planning Commission finds that the draft Comprehensive Plan includes a Public Facilities and Services Element. The Planning Commission further finds the Public Facilities and Services Element addresses the capital facilities and utility element requirements of RCW 36.70A.070(3) and (4). Specifically the Planning Commission finds that the Public Facilities and Services Element includes an inventory of existing facilities, identifies future needs, includes a list of projects needed to address future needs, and identifies potential sources of revenue for funding the required projects. The Planning Commission notes that a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), addressing the need to include a detailed six-year financing plan, will be adopted through a separate action and incorporated by reference into the Comprehensive Plan.
13. The Comprehensive Plan reviewed by the Planning Commission consists of two volumes. Volume I includes the body of the Comprehensive Plan, including its goals and policies, and volume II contains supporting information, studies, and background material.

Recommendation:

Based on the findings above the Planning Commission makes the following recommendations:

1. The Planning Commission recommends the City Council adopt the comprehensive plan attached as exhibit “A”.
2. The Planning Commission recommends the City Council adopt the comprehensive plan maps attached as exhibit “B”.
3. Minor changes may be made to the final plan and maps to address errors, omissions, or inconsistencies.

Dated this _____ day of February 2023

Marianne Manville-Ailles
Chair, City of Burlington Planning Commission

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Attachments:

- "A" Comprehensive Plan (volumes I and II)
- "B" Comprehensive Plan Maps